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# HOUSING AND FOOD INSECURITY ON CAMPUS

PSU's First Homelessness and  
Housing Insecurity Study

One Student's Personal Account  
of Homelessness at PSU

& more inside







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Starry Night PDX by Josh Gates  
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## Letter From the Editor



The Fall term is now in full swing. During this potentially stressful period as we approach midterms, I invite you to cozy up to a warm beverage and peruse the pages of The Pacific Sentinel to calm your nerves.

To this point in the year, we have been divided by an election cycle that has been considered by many to be the most important of our lifetimes. We have been told that the very foundation of democracy hangs in the balance, and many of us have spent arduous months fretting over the news that awaits us this month. I, too, have been among the masses with a personal risk in this election, and can happily report that this issue has no election based material beyond this letter. We, the editors, thought you could use the break.

Writing this in early October, I cannot speak to the contemporary issues of November, 2020. In a year made exceedingly difficult by pandemic, recession, and a range of public upsets, all I can offer is a sense of community with you, the reader. It is my fondest hope that in reading these pages you are able to set aside the existential, political, and physical terrors of our day.

The future need not be grim, however much we may have convinced ourselves to expect misfortune. It is my sincere hope that November's news cycle brings some degree of levity to you all. I believe that we stand on the brink of something tremendous, whether it is viewed by history as good or bad. It is not my place to advance hypothetical scenarios or a political agenda, so I shall withhold any further postulation.

Within these pages, you will read a new estimate of the scale of homelessness on our campus. You will also read my deeply personal account of my time on the street. I will admit that I struggled with the decision to publish this feature article I have been sitting on for several months. Ultimately, I decided that it is time for PSU to elevate its discussion of homelessness, to personify the struggle for housing that so many of us face. It is my hope that my account will inspire others to share their personal essays within these pages, to announce to the world that they exist and must be valued.

We will also tackle the subject of hate speech, touch on inventive means of combating the pandemic in Africa, and bring some much needed cheer with our Arts and Culture section representing Pete Krebs and Beyoncé.

Take your time, dear reader, and use this month to reflect.

Kind Regards,  
Vivian Veidt  
*Executive Editor*

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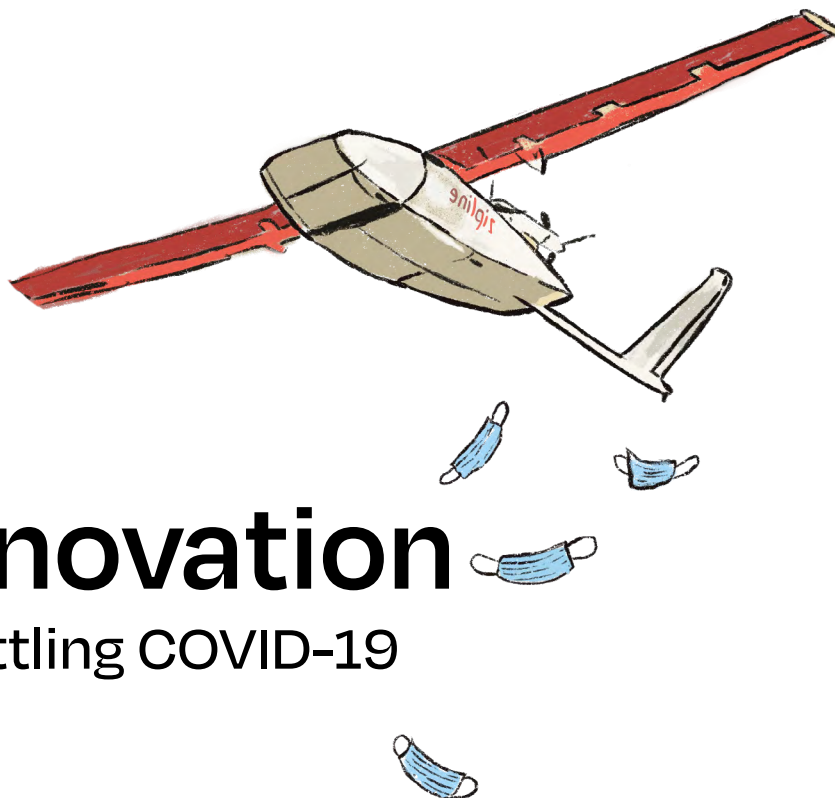


# collective MEMORY

Available on Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, and Spotify







# Airborne Innovation

## Drones and Robots Battling COVID-19

by Sophie Meyers

Illustration by Greer Siegel

Inshuti Mu Buzima (IMB), a sister organization to Partners in Health (PIH) based in Rwanda has partnered with Zipline to acquire more reliable cancer drugs according to a video put out by PIH. IMB serves community members across the country. The Executive Director of the oncology program at IMB, Dr. Joel M. Mulbiligi calls this a logistical nightmare for patients who require regular treatments leading to missed treatments and worse chances for the medication to work effectively. Drone delivery has allowed patients to continue to receive life saving medication despite coronavirus restrictions that, along with travel to the hospital, made it harder for sick people to receive medication and put at risk populations in situations where contracting the coronavirus could be more likely.

In the U.S., Zipline has partnered with Novant Health, a not for profit integrated healthcare provider with its main service area located across the east coast. Zipline is set to be used as a potential distributor for testing kits, drug trials and vaccines, however Zipline is not yet servicing any hospitals. In a video put out by Zipline, Angela Yochem, Chief Digital & Technology Officer at Novant Health, plans to implement drones to deliver personal protective equipment and other medical supplies to different hospitals quickly, turning an hour to 2 hour trip into fifteen minutes. Yochem stresses the necessity of faster delivery during the COVID-19 crisis.

According to Zipline, Ghana has implemented their drones to distribute masks, PPE and hand sanitizer to "hard to reach areas" across the country. Additionally, testing kits are sent via Zipline distribution centers. There are currently two Zipline distribution centers in Ghana. A Zipline representative in Ghana claims the drones reduce the cost compared with more traditional means of medical distribution.

According to Zipline, the drones feature an 11 foot wingspan and are six feet long. They can carry a maximum weight of 3.9 pounds and have a max speed of 90 mph and cruise around 60 mph. The drones can make a 100 mile round trip. The drones can operate in temperatures varying from -4 to 115 degrees fahrenheit, they can fly in the rain and in winds up to 14 m/s.

As of October 10, the world has reported 37,448,639 coronavirus cases leading to 1,077,187 deaths and 28,097,625 documented recoveries. In an effort to combat and aid in the recovery of sufferers of the coronavirus, many new and innovative ideas have been implemented such as drones and robots.

As of October 9, the U.S. has performed the second highest number of coronavirus tests per million people, behind China, and has the highest number of current cases and COVID-19 related deaths as of October 10.

African countries, among others, have successfully integrated both robot and drone technology to combat the spread of the virus. Africa confirmed it's first COVID-19 case in Egypt in February, followed by cases in Algeria and Nigeria with the first sub-Saharan case at a hospital in Yaba, Lagos. On March 1, a Nigerian university sequenced the SARS-CoV-2 genome within three days.

Zipline, a battery powered drone delivery service, has joined the fight against COVID-19. Used prominently in Africa and gaining popularity across the world, the company promises to deliver medical supplies to patients as an alternative to visiting hospitals or clinics. Zipline's drones provide contact free delivery to those most at risk of spreading and having increased complications from the coronavirus.

The company claims it can make deliveries anywhere in an 8,000 square mile radius of a

Zipline distribution center, which it describes as both a medical warehouse and drone airport. In photos, the company displays a drone with the Zipline logo that drops a small orange box featuring a parachute that helps the recipient's supplies land safely with the drone still airborne.

In Rwanda, robots are also being implemented to curb the spread of the virus. The World Health Organization found that during the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, healthcare workers were 21 to 32 times more likely to contract the virus than the general population.

In an interview with Reuters, Dr. David Turatsinze, based in a COVID-19 treatment facility in Rwanda, explains that the robots that have been introduced to his hospital are able to do "50% of the technical work." The robots are able to take vitals, record data, deliver video messages to doctors from patients, deliver food and medication to patients and screen up to 150 people per minute. Turatsinze explains that the robots help lessen the risk of transmission and cut patient visits with doctors down to about half their previous rate.

ZoraBots, the company who made these doctor assisting robots, has created many designs. They offer butler robots, robots who can help you stay in shape, robots who double as flower pots to help keep plants alive, hospitality robots for restaurants and hotels and more. •



# PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY'S FIRST HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING INSECURITY STUDY

*Pre and Post Covid-19 survey conducted at PSU is the first to include staff*

by Sophie Meyers

Graphics by McKinsey Carroll

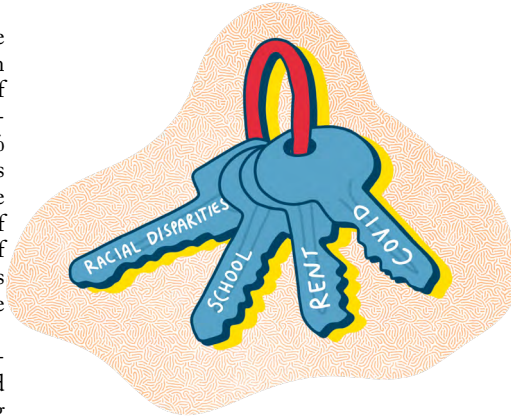
A recent survey conducted by Portland State University's Homelessness Research and Action Collaborative (HRAC) showed that 44.6% of student responders experienced housing insecurity, 16.1% experienced homelessness and 47% experienced food insecurity in the 12 months prior to Fall, 2019. In an interview with The Pacific Sentinel, Dr. Greg Townley, Director of Research for HRAC and Associate Professor of Community Psychology, stated that these rates were already above the national average and were exacerbated by the effects of COVID-19.

This was the first homelessness study conducted at PSU by HRAC. The Study determined rates of homelessness and food and housing insecurity among faculty, staff and students at PSU. There were two surveys conducted, one in Fall 2019 and a later study that documented the effects of COVID-19 on the same data as well as info regarding COVID-19 related issues specifically.

Townley notes that the survey "to my knowledge is one of or possibly the first in the country that has looked at employees." Townley also notes, however, that studies on other campuses involving staff are currently in progress.

The results of the survey featured 1017 staff members and reported 22.7% of staff experienced housing insecurity, 16.5% experienced food insecurity and 5.6 percent experienced homelessness in the 12 months prior to the survey. BIPOC employees reported double the rates of food and housing insecurity in comparison with white employees. Among all employees, staff reported higher rates of food and housing insecurity compared with faculty members or administrators. In the staff sample size, white employees were slightly larger than the general demographics of PSU staff. In noting why HRAC chose to implement staff in the study, Townley states; "We want to support all community members and they are an integral part of making our campus successful." He also notes the impact of teachers who are struggling with basic needs on students; "A student's experience in a classroom is going to be affected by instructors who are struggling with basic needs insecurity."

On the topic of students' inability to meet their basic needs, Townley states, "student success is not just grades and retention but also are they able to have the rest they need to thrive, to look after their health, to get enough sleep."



The study reports minority demographics have increased rates of homelessness and food and housing insecurity. Townley notes that indigenous students and other people of color "have higher rates of homelessness in the general population" and continues to note that as students these demographics "also have higher rates of homelessness and housing insecurity on college campuses." In the interview, Townley mentions the importance of "surfacing recommendations that account for this historical and systemic racism and discrimination," and urges that "[s]olutions should lead with racial equity and be centered on those who are most affected due to systemic and historical racism and discrimination." In addition to racial demographics experiencing a higher probability of not achieving basic needs, the LGBTQ+ community and people with disabilities also see higher rates of all vectors assessed in the study. Townley notes that the intersections of disabilities, race, and LGBTQ+ identity increase the rates further.

Native Americans experienced higher rates of homelessness than any other demographic. Of the 107 Native American students who responded, 29% experienced homelessness in the previous 12 months, nearly double the rate of white students. Of the 180 multi-racial students who responded to the study, 28.9% experienced homelessness. Additionally, homelessness was experienced among 27.8% of the 54 Middle Eastern or North African students who responded. Native American students also faced the highest rates of food insecurity. In the 30 days prior to the survey, 66.4% of Native American students met the criteria for food insecurity. The next highest demographic is multiracial PSU students, of whom 60.6% faced food insecurity.

The study was conducted before the effects of the coronavirus were seen across campus, however, a smaller study was conducted afterwards to determine the effects of COVID-19 on the student body's ability to find food and stable housing. The COVID-19 study included more questions to target the relationship of COVID-19 and rates of homelessness and food insecurity. This study yielded a much smaller sample size, featuring only 166 student surveys which the study cautions may be too small a sample size to yield accurate results. The study does show a dramatic increase in both rates of food and housing insecurity that are still indicative of some negative effect of COVID-19 on the PSU student body. 64.5% of participants reported housing insecurity and 20.5% of students reported experiencing homelessness, 55.4% of respondents reported food insecurity. 32.5% of respondents reported to have left their housing during the pandemic. More than a third of students reportedly lost their job due to the pandemic. Of students who reported reduced working hours or had lost their job, 90% experienced housing insecurity, homelessness or food insecurity.

Beyond problems of inequality among specific demographics of staff and students, many students have also noted they were not aware of many resources available to them. Emergency funds were made available to students for support with COVID-19 related expenses, however, according to Townley, "[a]lmost 40% of students said they were not aware emergency funds were available." In the study, many students noted the food pantry hours were a more difficult barrier during the pandemic. The free food market was temporarily shut down as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Townley notes that there were additionally "[g]eneral concerns about the fact that living in Portland is expensive." To combat this issue, Townley said "[w]e need to better take that into account when we're thinking about the cost of tuition and wages and the amount of access to financial aid that students get." Townley added that "[s]ome of these things are beyond or outside of what PSU can directly control, but it does speak to what are we lobbying for, what are we asking legislators to do, how are we advocating for more emergency funds." •

# BASIC NEEDS INSECURITY & HOMELESSNESS

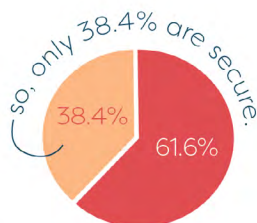
AMONG

# PSU STUDENTS & EMPLOYEES

12 Month Snapshot

**61.6%**

of students face at least one basic needs insecurity (food insecurity, housing insecurity, homelessness)



Black employees were more than

**2x**

as likely as White employees to experience housing insecurity, homelessness, and food insecurity.



BIPOC employees experienced high rates of basic needs insecurity.

**BIPOC**

## HOUSING INSECURITY & HOMELESSNESS

over the past year

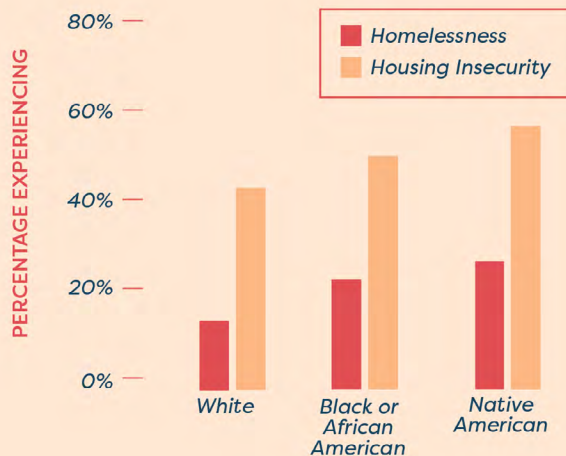
**44.6%**

of students and **22.7%** of employees reported experiencing housing insecurity.



...and **16.1%** of students and **5.6%** of employees experienced homelessness in the past 12 months.

Black, Indigenous, and People of Color students are more likely to experience insecurity.



Native American students were almost

**2x**

as likely as White students to experience homelessness.

They also had the highest rates of food insecurity (**66.4%**).

(infographic continued on next page)



# FOOD INSECURITY

over the past 30 days

**47%**  
of students  
**AND**  
**16.5%**  
of employees  
experienced food  
insecurity.

**41.8%**  
of students reported  
cutting the size of their  
meals because they did  
not have enough  
money for food.



**Almost 9%** of  
students indicated  
that they **did not**  
**eat for a whole**  
**day** because there  
was not enough  
money for food.

on average, this  
occurred on almost 10  
of the past 30 days.

**Other groups that  
reported high  
rates of basic  
needs insecurity:**



Transfer  
students



First  
generation  
students



Current or  
former foster  
youth



Those with a  
disability or  
medical  
condition



**OVER HALF**  
OF STUDENTS (54.6%)  
couldn't afford to eat  
balanced meals.

**= LGBTQIA+ =**

students and employees also reported higher rates of  
housing insecurity, homelessness, and food insecurity.

Financial stress,  
physical and mental  
health interference,  
insufficient sleep, and  
loneliness were higher  
among those who  
experienced housing  
insecurity,  
homelessness, and  
food insecurity.



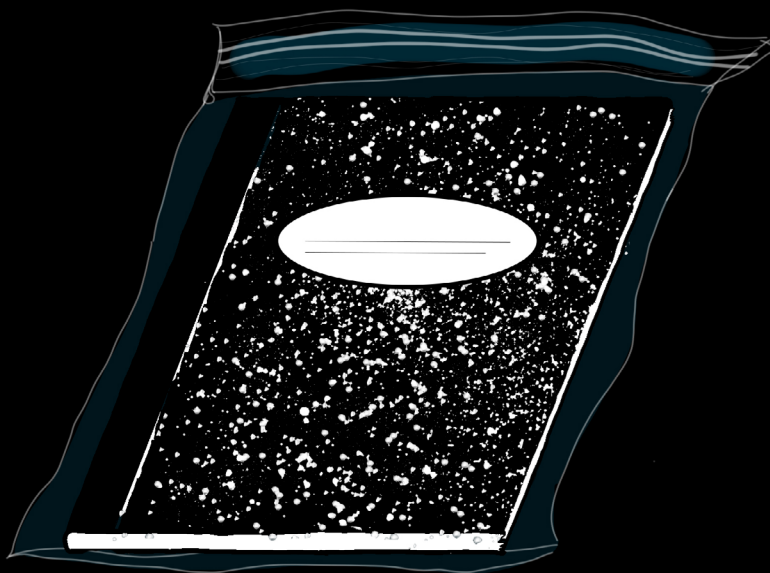
Data from PSU Housing and Food Insecurity Report conducted  
by Homelessness Research & Action Collaborative  
(September 2020) [www.pdx.edu/homelessness/psu](http://www.pdx.edu/homelessness/psu)

Authors: Greg Townley, Katricia Stewart, Jacen Greene, and  
Marta Petteni

Graphic by McKinsey Carroll

 **Portland State**  
Homelessness Research  
& Action Collaborative

illustrations by Alexandra Carlsson



# THE ZIPLOCK DIARY

A personal account of homelessness at PSU

by Vivian Veidt

*Editor's Note: The following article features discussion of homelessness, sex work, drug use, descriptions of injury, and violence against the LGBTQIA+ community. Though I felt it important to share this account, reader discretion is advised.*

I watched the heat of my breath dance through the crisp Winter air, first with the passion and exuberance of a survivor, then the weariness of a woman losing the battle for her life. As I reflected on the day's events, that slow breath took its bow on my frosted station wagon window. "No one wants to see this," I scribbled hastily into my journal between puffs of air to warm my hands. "If you had the chance, wouldn't you prefer to think this doesn't happen, that it's just some fairy tale to keep kids in line?" I put down my journal, then stared through the moonroof of my would-be coffin and wondered if this would be the night that I wouldn't make it.

Like so many nights before this one, I fell asleep shivering under layers of tattered blankets and sleeping bags. I was one of the lucky ones. There in my mechanical chamber, I was safe from all threats but the creeping, unstoppable elements. I was homeless, 30 years old, and nearing the end of a long fight to regain my humanity. Two years earlier, I was not so fortunate.

There in my hands, chronicled in one volume shielded by a ziplock bag, were two years I now scarcely believe were real.

## Any Port in a Storm

A study conducted in Vancouver, British Columbia by Dr. Putu Duff and a cohort of colleagues found that among 252 sampled street based sex workers, homelessness impacted 43.3% over a follow-up period of 18 months. Stateside, a study of 130 people engaged in sex work in San Francisco found that 84% had experienced homelessness at some point in their lives. The connection between homelessness and sex work is particularly strong for youth. 27.5% of street youth and 9.5% of homeless youth in shelter reported engaging in survival sex according to a nationally representative study published in the American Journal of Public Health in 1999. I was no different.

I had packed my life into a suitcase, my term in law school cut short by the limits of my meager finances. For nearly a year I bounced between countries and odd jobs, never quite landing the gig that would materialize into stable housing. When you travel enough, and when you're getting paid, you hardly notice that you've become homeless. That suitcase eventually followed me to live with a connection in Oregon. For fear of retaliation, I dare not name him. Over the

course of two months, that connection and his wife barraged me with coercion into sex work. It was a life I had known before, as a teenager, one of the many exploitations waged against young women on the street. It was a life to which I refused to return.

My unease at the living arrangement and my discomfort with the coercion one day turned to a sense of danger. That day I ran. I ran until I could no longer run, then I walked. By the time I could not walk, I was shrouded in an evening mist in Salem, 45km from where I began the day. After a brief meal, I inched on blistered feet to an orchard in Keizer, where I would rest for as much of the night as I could stand the late September chill. There I wrote of the day behind me on paper now stained with tears, "I can't do this again, I want to die. No, I don't want to die, I just want my old life back." Wearing only a light jacket, I fell asleep that night to the rhythmic chattering of my teeth.

## No Longer Human

The second day of this new venture into the disjointed life of street homelessness began before dawn, when the orchard sprinklers jarred me awake. I stumbled onto the blisters that had overtaken my feet, each step a greater pain than the last. By now my gait alerted those around me to something abject, that I was less than



human in a neurological and psychological phenomenon that Dr. Susan Fiske calls “dehumanized perception.” Dehumanized perception is a phenomenon within the brain that distinguishes the in group of humanity from the out group of Other, where I stood with vermin and objects.

Thinking of my dehumanized perception, my mind and, naturally, my pen turned to “Ningen Shikkaku,” or “No Longer Human” by Osamu Dazai. The Japanese novel describes a life of disaffection and the paranoia that others will notice our many collective failures to harmonize with the society around us, disqualifying us from our humanity. Though in my case, as is common among women forced into street life, the cause of my alienation was an attempt to protect myself from harm, I couldn’t rip my mind from the illustrative paranoia of Oba Yozou, the book’s central anti-hero. After only one night sleeping in an orchard, I could feel the penetrating stares of the minds around me, working to determine whether I was a woman or a blight and how it must be my fault that I straddled so close to the line between them. Worse yet, I blamed myself. I had internalized my self-preservation as a failure and the cause of my situation.

The pain in my soles too much to walk normally, I began to take each step on the sides of my feet, bowing my ankles and drawing attention to my difference. When the twisting became too much, I would return to the shocks of flat-footed locomotion, stinging and stabbing with each phase of a step. First the pinpoint pain, like a hundred razor blades lining the heel, then the dispersed, blunt loathing of full contact and the rending of the body’s weight on the sacs of blood and plasma, only to give way to sore, throbbing relief as the cycle continued in alternation. In that pain, I hardly noticed the smallest toe on my right foot breaking as the skin split to reveal the sorry truth of my structure. By midnight, I was in Portland, mangled from toe to ankle.

That night I lacked the comfort of solitude for the first time since my teenage years. There was no orchard, no safety, only the density of the city and the vulnerability of the unprotected night. I spent those hours in a liminal state of half-sleep, a dangerous space where the imagination and any pre-existing mental illness rampage. Nodding off for mere minutes at a time, every sound

was a threat. Each squeak, coo, and siren; every footstep and utterance terrified the racing mind. That night I rested my feet more than my eyes, braced against a highway-side wall, obstructed from view by small bushes and a fence as twisted as my legs.

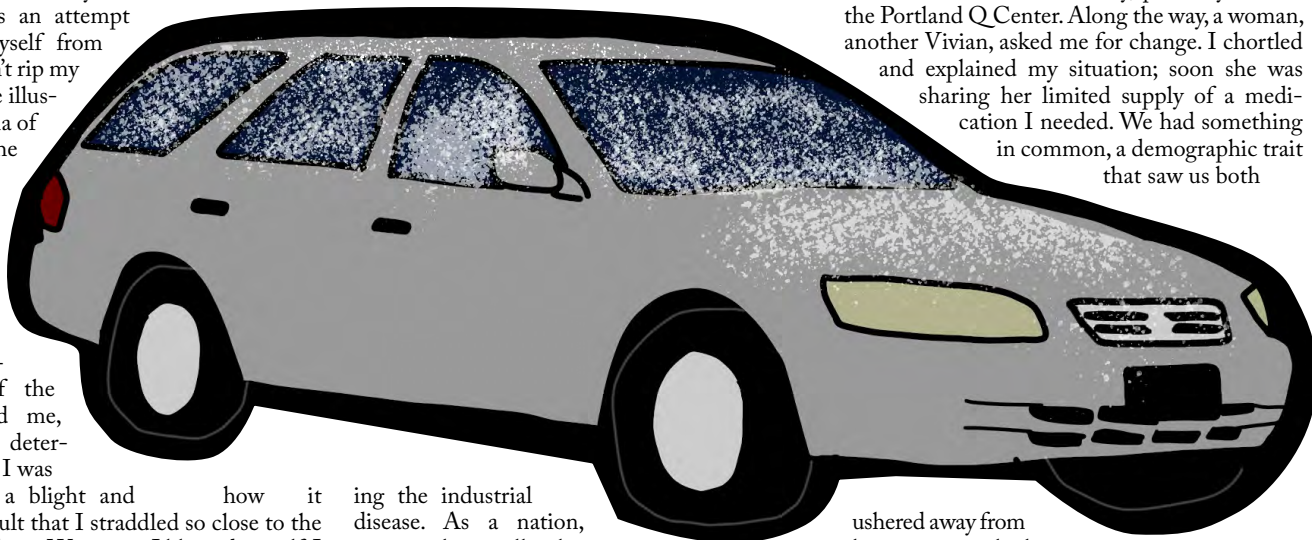
In the world of excess we have created, sleep deprivation is nearly a joke, a badge of pride worn to demonstrate one’s commitment to feed-

good decisions. None of us can do that.”

## Out of Control

By day three, you start to lose your mind. Sleepless, friendless, I stumbled across the street through a volley of honking horns. What would have taken seconds under normal circumstances now took minutes, each filled with agonizing stabs of the fresh tearing of blisters. I was heading to the only place I knew I could reach for first-aid and a slice of the dignity I was starting to forget I was ever eligible to receive. I wasn’t heading for a shelter or a soup kitchen, and I knew far better than to test my luck with a church. I was making my way slowly, painfully toward the Portland Q Center. Along the way, a woman, another Vivian, asked me for change. I chortled and explained my situation; soon she was sharing her limited supply of a medication I needed. We had something in common, a demographic trait that saw us both

Multnomah, Washington, and Clackamas Counties are home to an estimated 38,000 people experiencing homelessness



ing the industrial disease. As a nation, we are chronically sleep deprived, with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimating that 35% of Americans do not meet the recommended seven hours of nightly rest. When those with every resource to achieve comfortable sleep fail to do so, it almost erases the difference between chronic, low-level sleep deprivation and the severity of the condition for those sleeping beside roadways.

Sleep deprivation, a true lack of sleep, erodes the very ability of the brain to behave in socially acceptable ways. Sleep is the straightjacket that keeps all of us from our most basic emotional mess. According to Dr. Bill Griesar—Neuroscience Coordinator of Northwest Neuroscience Outreach Group Growing in Networks (NW NOGGIN)—in an interview I conducted in 2019, “you cannot expect people to make complex decisions and consider all the options and behave in ways where they might hold back emotional responses in certain circumstances if they don’t get sleep.” His words took me back to the day I arrived in Portland, raving and emotional at every interaction, every choice. I just wanted the world to stop. It was comforting after two years to hear that it wasn’t my fault, but that “If you’re sleep deprived, you cannot make

ushered away from the society to which we thought we belonged—we were both transgender.

Nearly one in three transgender Americans will experience homelessness in their lifetimes, a sobering statistic from the 2015 US Transgender Survey (USTS). Of those, over a quarter avoid shelters out of fear of mistreatment—they’re right to. 70% of respondents to the USTS who stayed in a shelter reported some form of mistreatment, from harassment to assault or refusal of services. Vivian was no exception. She shared with me the occasions and locations where she was assaulted, guided me to avoid them, then pulled her advice. “You’re pretty, though,” I recounted her words in my journal, “I don’t know if that makes it better or worse.” I received familiar cautions against women’s shelters, and stronger warning against services dominated by men. She advised that I go to TPI, Transition Projects, and I would eventually heed her advice.

I stumbled inside to find the Q Center was prepared; after all, between 30-43% of the general homeless population and 40% of homeless youth identify as LGBTQIA+, according to the National Coalition for the Homeless. They provided me with bandages, gauze, and isopropyl

alcohol to treat my wounded feet, another painful step in the healing process. They also provided a copy of the Street Roots Rose City Resource, a 104 page guide to all the services available to the homeless in Portland. I pored over the guide, huddled in the library of the Q Center for hours until a meeting of Narcotics Anonymous began in the next room. 22 agonizing steps later, I was in my liar's chair, pretending I was there for any reason other than the food donated to the congregating hopeful. Before the guilt could crush me, it was my turn to share. My liar's chair had become a pulpit, magnified under the watchful eyes of my peers in recovery. I told them of a past life, one I had never admitted publicly—the experience was intense, terrifying, liberating.

### Prologue

There, before a crowd of strangers, I told of my teenage years, my early experiences with homelessness. Pretending that I was fully housed in that moment and worried someone would notice the bark and soil stuck to my jumper, I shared my truth. When I was 15, like 43-46% of homeless queer youth according to a study by the Williams Institute, my immediate family rejected me. In the leadup to that event, I was a part time runaway, spending as much time as possible anywhere else. I met the acquaintance of another genderqueer youth and the two of us would spend our nights sneaking into clubs and sleeping in their car. After I was removed from my immediate family, I was able to live with a connection in Oregon for some time, the same connection I now feared, then eventually found my way to Los Angeles. After nearly a year there, I came out to my partner, with whom I lived. The relationship broke down and I soon found myself without a home.

I provided farm labor and performed odd tasks until I found my way to San Francisco, my ultimate destination as a queer youth who had only heard the city described as a haven for my kind. When I stepped out of the truck of a kindly Mormon Bishop to surrender to my fate, I was cautiously optimistic that I could find work, housing, and stability. With modest savings from a quiet Spring of labor, I set out with a plan. That night, I celebrated my victorious arrival in the city by the bay by flirting my way into whichever nightclub would have me. I lucked into one and left with a woman nearly twice my age. The following night I passed myself off with a man in his mid-twenties. By the end of my first week, sex in exchange for shelter had become my job. By the end of my second week, I no longer trusted my clients enough to stay the night. I took to the streets after a date gone bad. Drunk, crying, I happened upon a boy, nearly a man, who would change my life forever.

His name was Ezra, a teenager thrown into the wild by a parent with no regard for the humanity of a queer child. Ezra wore the scars of the battle that cast him into street life with the

“...some of the people who do end up here because of services are youth who had to leave families because of their queer identities, people with mental illness whose families can't take care of them, and they're dropped off, left at a hospital.”

nonchalance I wore my tattered, bloodied dress that night. I didn't stop to think that he might not be trustworthy, it was as if something in my body compelled me to cry into his shoulder and stay with him from then on. That night I fell asleep on a stone stoop, my tattered blue dress and ravaged nylons concealed by his tidy wool trench coat, lost in his waxy, raven curls, and clinging desperately and dispassionately to the warmth of his body.

Ezra was hardened and bitter; he couldn't help it, the choice had been made for him. He found his way to that slick slab of San Francisco stonework by way of Eastern Idaho and courtesy of the throngs of truckers cutting their way through the Western nights. Ezra was twice discarded under circumstances that left me ever unable to mourn my own luck. As he told it, he was sixteen when his fiercely conservative father first witnessed his queer identity. The resulting violence was familiar to Ezra, but his lover was entirely unprepared. From the moment he explained that, he had the whole of my sympathy, having myself been raised under a patriarch who daily invented cause to assert that my kind were abominations before a being simultaneously god and country. That first time, Ezra pleaded, somewhere between a boast and a confession, it was

almost a relief to be chased into the night with a warning shot and the sure message: “If I see you ‘round here again... I won't miss!”

Ezra described tracing his way to the nearest city, being arrested and reunified with his father. He released the top two buttons of his silky, black shirt and timidly spread the collar. When you're a street kid, you get used to being called a liar; bouncers, shelters, courts,

and every therapist, friend, and lover you're lucky to find ever after. When you've heard it enough, you even begin to doubt yourself. Written across his shoulder, neck, and the small patch I could see of his tightly bound chest was the rigid, webbed, raw climax to his story. “He didn't miss.”

I saw Ezra as a twin spirit, a brother at arms in the grips of an invisible battle to survive. I grew to trust him, and eventually trust him too much. Ezra possessed the street smarts I did not—and I possessed the body he did not. Before long, we were squatting in a vacant house and I was renting my services for money instead of shelter. After eight weeks, I was ready for a different line of work and a transition toward a healthier life through a menial job I'd secured on Fisherman's Wharf. Ezra, for all his instinct to survive, had long since given up his place in the mainstream of society—a process called disaffiliation.

In his effort to maintain the status quo, Ezra injected me with heroin for the first time. He admitted as much the last time I would ever see him. I have no memory of how many doses I took in the weeks that followed, all I can remember is the insidious puppetry of addiction forming and that first time I consented to the numbing comfort of the needle. I was sick, possibly in withdrawal, and Ezra promised it would ease my pain. In doing so, it cost me a newly acquired job and my first path out of street life. I was stuck, and once again I blamed myself.

With a chime, my time to share was expired. I snapped back to the present and sat uncomfortably with the crowd in recovery who now knew me better than my own parents. I hobbled over to the trays of food laid out as snacks and built myself a tidy, inconspicuous meal. “Don't look homeless,” a maxim Ezra taught me as Rule #1 to surviving street life rang in my ears. When the building finally locked that evening, I made my way outside, waited by the center's picnic tables for the crowd to clear, fielded sympathies from my single serving kin, and ultimately crouched beneath the table to sleep. That night, it began to rain.

### Healing

On the fourth day of my stint as a homeless Portlander, my intentions revolved around two motives: treating my wounded feet and securing basic provisions to get a night of sleep. It wasn't long before I found Vivian again. She offered me a stay in her tent, an offer I considered only until the subject of drugs came up. This time, I





wouldn't need them. This time I would survive without that escape from circumstance. At least, I thought well enough of myself to write such pleasant aspirations.

Soaked, frigid, and filthy with blood and pus, I set out. It's amazing how the brain acclimates to pain. After only three days walking on open wounds, I scarcely thought of my slow pace. The stinging was background noise, along with the cursing and muttering I cast at anyone who dared to challenge my occupation of space. I made my way first to the nearest thrift store, where I found a child-sized, but suitably warm sleeping bag. The clerk informed me that they didn't carry adult sized sleeping bags because she believed the homeless would steal them. To some extent, I must have blended in. I paid my way through under the watchful judgement of a security guard, then trudged my way through the increasing pain of my battered feet to buy a tarp from a nearby department store.

As the rain set in, I thought more of sleep than shelter. Even if I was ready to surrender to the system of queues that make up the continuum of care, the services were concentrated on the other side of town, a walk too far for me in my current state. Defeated, I found an isolated space in a series of decorative bushes and folded myself into my tarp to rest. My toe burned and stabbed as my soles throbbed and swelled. Hours must have passed, but in my condition, I had no idea how long I danced between consciousness and relief from my worldly suffering. At that moment, I was transported to napping in the greenhouse of my previous home during light Spring rains. The plinking and trickling of the water sang a lullaby to my weary soul, a lullaby of better days past and future. Day faded to evening and the shower departed from overhead. Out of fear that I had drawn attention to myself, I sought a more permanent space for the night. For the first time, I found a camp.

I always hesitate to call roadside communities camps, just as I would hesitate to call trauma a blessing. Camping is something we do for recreation, when we become weary of the world's demands—roadside encampments are something altogether else, a reminder that we have failed as a society to provide for all our peers. From the moment I asked permission to enter the camp, one of many that dot the Interstate Five corridor, I was guarded. I had never spent much time forming community with my peers during my teenage experience on the street. I let Ezra take the lead back then. I

admit that despite my own experience, I was still under the influence of the many prejudices our society holds against the homeless. Not the least of which was my expectation that others would be as mean as my condition had made me.

What I found was a warm welcome, people to swap stories with, and an evening shared with good company. There was the veteran who felt so undeserving of a place in civilian society that he ostracized himself, eventually falling into homelessness, the man who struggled to pay his mortgage after the 2007 financial crisis robbed him of both his home and his livelihood as a realtor, and a woman whose name, despite warranting my tremendous thanks, I forgot immediately. She was a kindly woman, who must have been in her mid to late forties, dressed in a combination of jeans and a scrub top. She was a nurse. In all the times I've told this part of my story, I've been particular on that point; it's not that

for the unhoused. In Oregon, the unhoused can qualify for healthcare under the Oregon Health Plan, and have support to register at most shelters and some other service providers. What we didn't have, however, was equal access. Even with the means of payment secured by the state, the homeless face discrimination when seeking medical services. A study conducted by the National Coalition for the Homeless found that 49.7% of homeless individuals surveyed experienced some form of discrimination from medical services.

I rested with that camp for two more days before deciding to move on. The community was nice, and it restored a small portion of the humanity I felt lacking in my new life. Ultimately, I felt safer and more confident that I would overcome my homelessness alone, in a way that I could always deny my condition. I was convinced at the time that I could remain invisible enough that I might bluff my way into a job. It would be another ten days before I began to panic about my minimal, dwindling savings.

#### Street Life

It was the fifth day before I had any time to consider long-term shelter. Homelessness had become my full time job. I spent hours queuing for

meals and learning the ropes of the routine that would keep me alive until I found work again. I was eligible for a shower and a 90 minute nap at the Salvation Army women's shelter, a place Vivian had warned me against because of a reputation for turning away transgender women. I eventually learned what I needed to do to enter the waitlist for housing assistance at TPI, which would be three months away at best. The problem was that, nearly a week into homelessness, I would not be eligible for another two weeks until I tested negative for tuberculosis.

Once I had the required papers documenting my health, I need only call or visit once each week to maintain my place in the waitlist for housing. For weeks I persisted on that list, maintaining my mobile phone for as long as I could. When I could no longer afford service, my phone was disabled and I was forced to choose one day each week to sacrifice a meal to maintain my hope for housing. In the following days, as my blistered feet turned to chalky callouses, I took to rooftops for the peace of mind they provided while trying to sleep in a city that bustles until 2:00 on most mornings. By 22:00, the cleaning staff would leave the businesses upon which I resided, raising no suspicion when I climbed to my retreats. If I left before 5:00 I could escape any awareness of

...between 30-43% of the general homeless population and 40% of homeless youth identify as LGBTQIA+

she had been a nurse or that she filled that role in her street community. No, she was a nurse at the nearby hospital. She continued to practice, and she may to this day, despite her condition with the unhoused and forgotten of Portland. She told me of her cancer treatments and the point at which they became so unaffordable that she lost her home. She continued to work, decorating herself with a smile so that she could continue her treatments and someday, she said with hope, recover. She wore that smile even as she introduced herself, bracing my toe with a makeshift splint and dabbing my feet with alcohol pads before wrapping them in clean gauze.

The failure that is the American healthcare system is a complex issue for the housed, and an even more perplexing and consequential one



my presence and carry on a normal seeming life.

I began to sacrifice lunches so I could spend part of each day applying for work on the computers at the Multnomah County central library. For months I would search for work, often eating only one modest meal in a day. After nearly three months on the street, I had adapted to the cruelty of daily life, but not to the onslaught of Winter. It was December and I would occasionally wake to find frost gripping the thin layer of plastic that protected me from the frequent rains.

There's something eminently inexplicable about street homelessness in Winter, something primeval, perhaps the envy of the Jack Londons of the world. In Portland, surviving Winter is equal parts dodging raindrops and fighting for warmth in whatever place will have you. By this point, I was wearing a donated parka that doubled as an additional sleeping bag and kept me mostly warm, even sweating through my shivers at night. During the day, sufficiently clean, it performed the miracle of concealing my increasingly filthy clothes from passers-by, allowing me to spend a dollar on a cup of coffee and enjoy hours of central heating. Once again, I heard Ezra's voice tell me "don't look homeless" as I bathed in the relief of acceptance by the housed and blissfully ignorant.

I eventually accepted work repairing computers, a return to a trade I held many years prior. Though the work was irregular, the job came with the perk of sleep on my employer's floor. I eventually saved enough for my escape from the lowest echelon of homelessness to a second tier that almost felt like being housed. After two months of irregular computer repair work, I began driving for a rideshare app in a rented car. I slept in the boot on most nights, hiding all of my material possessions in the tyre well during the day. At very least I was safe, out of sight. So began my year and a half of living off and on in a car.

### Mythos

When you go from living outside to living in a car, it's tempting to believe that homelessness is behind you. It was almost easy to consider myself a common member of the working poor as I steadily acquired enough income to buy a vehicle of my own, even if my motive was merely a safe box in which to sleep. The truth is, I was more isolated there than I had been on the street. There's a certain invisibility to off the street homelessness, one that makes it far easier to ignore how many people shared my fate.

Multnomah, Washington, and Clackamas Counties are home to an estimated 38,000 people experiencing homelessness, according to a 2019 study by Portland State University's Homelessness Research and Action Collaborative (HRAC). The study analyzed data including Housing and Urban Development's Point In Time Count of people experiencing homelessness. The HUD Point In Time Count, which

"I can't do this again, I want to die. No, I don't want to die, I just want my old life back."

Dr. Marisa Zapata of HRAC described as a "suppressed count," includes those sleeping in shelters, emergency warming facilities, and previously identified sites on a single night in January of each year. The study also included data from service providers and K-12 Department of Education homelessness reports across an entire year to come up with a figure 6.6 times higher than the Point In Time Count suggests.

HUD claims that people sleeping on the street or sleeping in cars are counted in their report. Having been in both conditions on count nights, I can say that I was never among the counted. Perhaps it was my interest in maintaining a low profile, or perhaps, as Zapata had suggested, the count is suppressed and cannot be trusted to accurately reflect the number of people experiencing homelessness. What mattered most as I pondered the 38,000 figure was the shock of how many more may have evaded even HRAC's tally.

Homelessness is not merely those living on the street or in cars. The term also applies to those in shelters, temporary or transitional housing, and "couch surfing" or living "doubled-up"—multiple families sharing a single residence in a dangerous, illegal, or unstable way. Zapata stressed that "they're not necessarily putting people in places that are really appropriate for housing. So people are living in garages, I know somebody who was living in someone's shed for two years... but it was a place. People who were living in attics, and making do that way, HUD does not consider them homeless. The US Department of Education does." She described that "if you look at the McKinney-Vento [Department of Education] numbers, 30,000 is actually pretty conservative" for an estimate of the city's homeless population.

The invisibility of some forms of homelessness naturally turned our discussion toward the many myths surrounding homelessness. There were the traits ascribed to those in my situation—namely laziness, an unwillingness to work, and drug use. I reflected on my own experience, both living through two years of homelessness sober and another portion of a year actively struggling with addiction. I thought about my constant desire for work and the labor required simply to secure meals and basic services. I thought about everyone I met along the way who both worked and lived without shelter, then turned to the housing crisis that faces Portland today.

We addressed the myth of the "magnet city," a belief "pretty much in every city in the country that everyone who is houseless is moving to

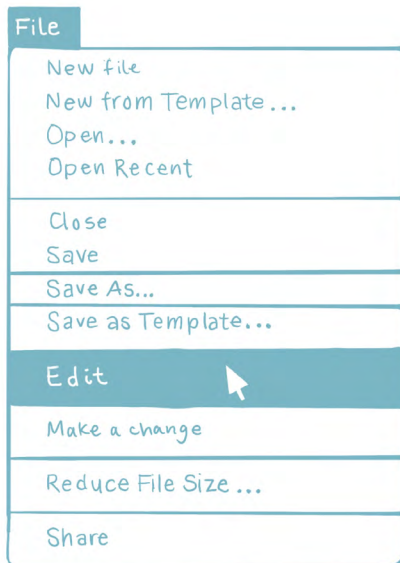
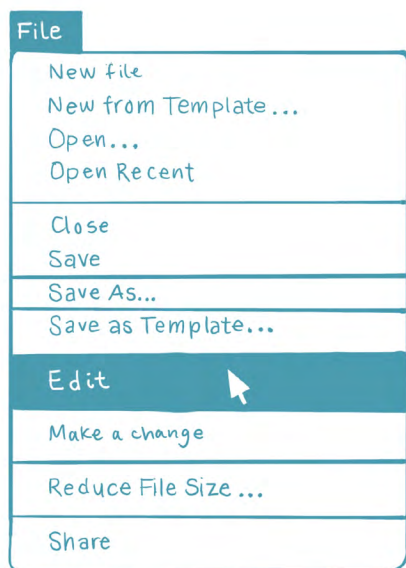
their city for accessing services." The myth has been, in Zapata's words, "widely debunked every Point In Time Count, where people are asked where they lived last, where they moved from, and why they moved. They're not moving to their communities homeless."

Though the myth has been widely debunked, my mind turned to the fact that I did, in fact, twice move to a city for services. Zapata then added, as though reading my mind, "some of the people who do end up here because of services are youth who had to leave families because of their queer identities, people with mental illness whose families can't take care of them, and they're dropped off, left at a hospital. That, to me, needs to be a different conversation."

Zapata, in her capacity as an urban planner as well as the director of HRAC, explained that "We don't pay enough attention to housing. Our analyses of housing are really driven by 'do we have enough housing units.' Until recently, we didn't really pay attention to the equity of those analyses, the reproduction of the status quo of reproducing inequities as we design plans for housing." Probed for solutions, the answer seems obvious, "I'm a big proponent of saying that housing is the solution to homelessness." Zapata continued, "if you think about this 38,000 number, the percentage of those folks who need very intensive long term services is very small." She described that housing is the basic need that is unmet, and that those who require treatment for mental illness or addiction could only be served fully once the need for housing is met.

Stories of survival are expected to end on a joyful note, one of relief that makes the invested words worthwhile. I had made my way to Portland, injured and alone, seeking services that could enable me to once again generate a place to call home. After six months on the street and a year and a half living between couches, floors, and the unsuitable habitat of a car, I was no closer to a sense of home when I wrote these words. It is only in the intervening months between first draft and print that I have found shelter stable enough to unpack the trauma of the experience. What I offer in lieu of a happy ending is an opportunity to reconsider the myths and prejudices that prevent other stories from reaching an audience. Ultimately, what I represent is a challenge to the idea of the incapable homeless person. For now, everything I have comes back to Ezra's Rule #1. Aesthetic, posture, even the veneer of education, do they amount to anything more than illusions performed in the circus of classism that governs our interactions? If there is a lesson to be taken from my experiences and Rule #1, it's that we cannot exist independent of the perception of others, that in all ways physical, aesthetic, prosthetic, and characteristic, we are bound by judgements that propel, confine, and direct the very course of our lives. •





# Constitutionally Speaking

Hate Speech is a Problem, We Should Change the Constitution

by Vivian Veidt  
illustrations by Alison White

According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation: Criminal Justice Information Services Division, there has been a sharp increase in hate crime in the United States since 2016, though the most current data published by CJIS details events from 2018. Not included among the ongoing tally of hate and bias crimes in the United States, however, is the far more prolific problem of hate speech. This magazine has previously chronicled examples of hate speech on the campus of Portland State University and throughout the Portland metropolitan area.

Hate speech currently lacks a legal definition under United States law. We can propose, however, a definition based on Kenneth Ward's 1998 contribution to the University of Miami Law Review in an essay titled "Free Speech and the Development of Liberal Virtues: An Examination of the Controversies Involving Flag-Burning and Hate Speech." In this essay, Ward describes hate speech as "any form of

expression through which speakers primarily intend to vilify, humiliate, or incite hatred against their targets." Such targets would then be grouped according to the conventional enumerated grounds of "race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender, or gender identity," and the implied grounds that accompany them in line with the FBI's definition of a hate crime.

I would like to believe that the need for competent hate speech law is evident, as the connection between hate speech and the commission of hate crimes is self-evident, but the United States as a country seems to disagree.

I'll base my assessment of hate speech law in the United States on the case of *Matal v. Tam*, which was decided by the Supreme Court in 2017, and the precedent that informed it. In this case, the Supreme Court unanimously decided that not only is hate speech protected by the First Amendment, but many laws and policies to prevent it may be unconstitutional. The bulk of the case revolved around the use of a "disparagement clause" in patent and trademark law. This disparagement clause essentially

prohibited the registration of trademarks that disparage the members of a racial or ethnic group, or any other group that can be read into the law. According to Justice Samuel Alito's opinion, "Speech may not be banned on the ground that it expresses ideas that offend." The disparagement clause was deemed unconstitutional and a precedent was set with the justification from Alito that "the proudest boast of our free speech jurisprudence is that we protect the freedom to express 'the thought that we hate,'" himself ending with a quote from Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes in *United States v. Schwimmer*. I respectfully disagree with the assertion that hate speech merely offends, and I assert that hate speech becomes so when it can be construed as a call to action, vilification, or humiliation that harms a protected class of people. Though I would agree that the example in *Matal v. Tam* qualifies as reclamation of a slur, rather than hate speech, it is the precedent made by the wording of the judgement and its grouping together of hate speech and offensive speech that raises concern.

The precedent from *Matal v. Tam* establishes a rather frightening proposition that any attempt to curb hate speech on the part of state governments may be unconstitutional. There is, however, a minor saving grace. The Brandenburg Test, established by the Supreme Court case *Brandenburg v. Ohio* in 1969, is a legal test that determines which hate speech may not be protected by the First Amendment. It is a two part test that requires the hate speech to both be “directed to inciting or producing imminent lawless action” and be “likely to incite or produce such action.” Essentially, that means that hate speech must compel an illegal act and be likely understood by the listener to compel actually committing that act. This puts the state of hate speech law in the United States roughly on par with the law concerning threats of violence or property damage. That is to say, it is largely ineffective until a hate crime is either committed or conspired.

Knowing this about American law in the present, how can we create more responsible hate speech law in the future? There are multiple models in existence elsewhere in the world. Germany, for example, has explicit hate speech law written into their criminal code. New Zealand has embedded hate speech law into their national Human Rights Act. The United Kingdom has its Public Order Act and numerous legislation that has expanded it. What none of these nations have, however, is free speech protection that has been interpreted to protect hate speech and prevent countermeasures in the first place. For an example that better fits the

situation of the United States, we should look to Canada and its Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is similar to the Bill of Rights in the United States, and has the same authority as the Canadian Constitution. Indeed, it even starts in a similar fashion to the United States Bill of Rights, with its section two guaranteeing “freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication,” as well as religious freedom, freedom of peaceful assembly, and freedom of association. The major difference between the freedom of speech protections in the Charter versus the Bill of Rights is what is written in section one of the Charter. Section one reads:

“The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees the rights and freedoms set out in it subject only to such reasonable limits prescribed by law as can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society.”

That’s where hate speech law is saved. I won’t go into the legal reasoning in Canada, but this single sentence empowers Provinces, Territories, and the federal government of Canada to create reasonable hate speech laws that do not violate the Charter. If the laws are too strict, they can be struck down by the Supreme Court of Canada and made more lenient, which prevents the abhorrent possibility of a government cracking down on opposition speech. It’s an ingeniously simple principle of Canadian law that essentially pushes the responsibility of determining what is and is not acceptable speech to the courts, which

are then bound to their precedent to protect existing rights.

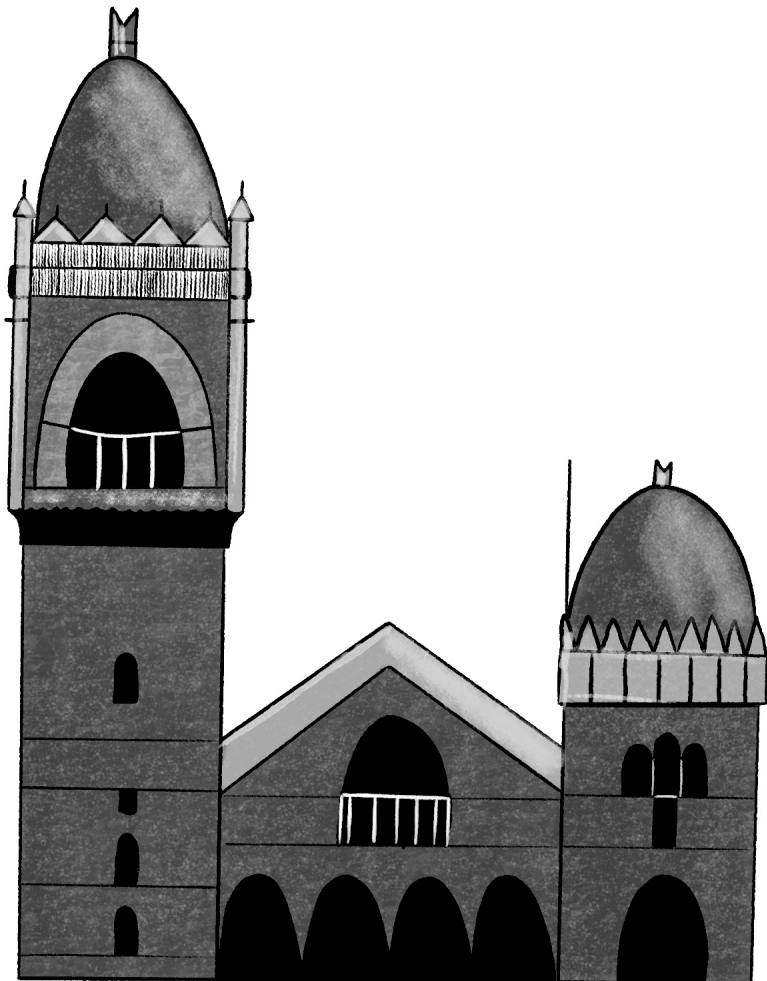
What I’m proposing is something similar in the United States, an amendment to the Bill of Rights that would grant the power to create reasonable laws to curtail hate speech, which would then refer the validity of those laws to the courts. One sentence can save us from the quagmire currently surrounding the generation of hate speech law, which would put us more in line with our economic contemporaries like the United Kingdom and Germany. As we have seen from Donald Trump’s disparaging remarks toward minority groups and the coinciding rise in hate crimes since 2016, there is a need to curb speech that vilifies, humiliates, and leaves already vulnerable groups susceptible to greater harm. If American society is not prepared to defend its vulnerable by moral strength alone, it is up to its people to empower the law to intervene. •





# God May Be Dead, but the Christian Left Isn't

During a time of societal upheaval, conservative Christians have a loud voice, but progressive Christianity is out there.



by Lily Lamadrid  
Illustrations by Bailey Granquist

*Editor's Note: The Pacific Sentinel does not endorse any religious tradition and the opinions below are strictly those of the author.*

If you Google “How do I be a good Christian?” the search engine will give you 1,890,000,000 answers in less than a second. The first is a WikiHow (with pictures!).

According to this WikiHow, there are two main methods. The first step of method one is to have a close relationship with God. This means first: “ask Jesus into your life if you haven’t already.” If you aren’t sure how to do that, don’t worry, there’s a linked WikiHow (It also has pictures!) This step boils down to praying to Jesus to forgive your sins and devote yourself to following him.

**“Almost every night of the week, some people from our group are present at the protests.”**

Good, now we’ve begun! But wait—record scratch. “It’s not a one and done thing,” says local pastor Rev. Jennifer Brownell. “I turn my life over to God everyday, constantly with every act, but it’s also about being engaged and involved and listening.” Brownell is a pastor at First Congregational United Church of Christ in Vancouver, WA. There she works not only on a weekly service, but also justice ministries—actions the church takes to better their community.

“It’s not about just being the priest in the ivory tower performing rituals. It’s also about being in the world, being on the street, being engaged with people.”

Brownell identifies as part of the Christian left. The Christian left is a very amorphous group. Some would have it defined one way, to include some, some would define it another to include others. Some main markers that may indicate whether a church, person, or group belongs to the Christian left include: social justice orientation, affirming theology (this includes affirmation of faith, sexual orientation, and even religion), freedom of choice, contextual biblical interpretation, and a tendency not toward conversion, but fellowship with all peoples. As Brownell’s church says every Sunday: “whoever you are, wherever you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here.”

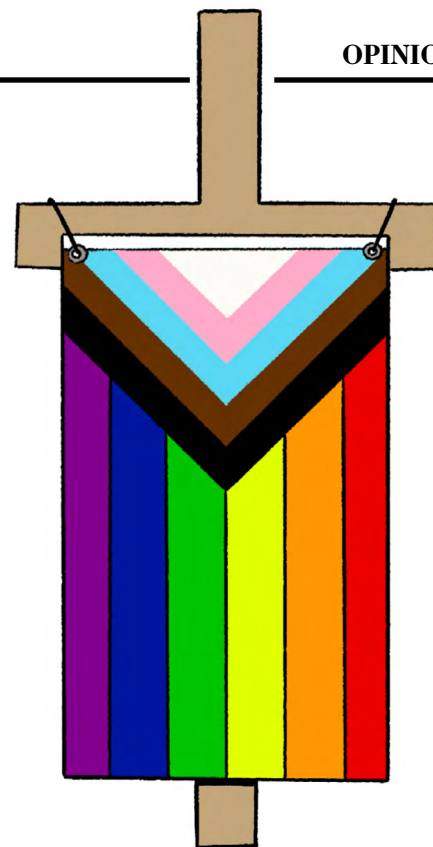
In 2015, a group of people were gathered around a flagpole. They were not pledging allegiance, they were staring slack jawed. A thirty year old woman was scaling the thirty foot pole outside the South Carolina State House to remove the Confederate flag. In the accounts that would come later, most reporters would leave out a vital aspect from the tale of progressive political action: she was praying. As Bree Newsome, the daughter of a baptist preach-

er, climbed thirty feet off the ground, she was reciting the Lord’s Prayer and the 27th Psalm. According to the New Yorker, when she reached the top she declared, “In the name of Jesus this flag has to come down.”

While the Black Lives Matter protests have been occurring in Portland, there have been interfaith clergy on the ground. Not to proselytize or counter protest, but to witness. “We’re called clergy witnesses, like the [American Civil Liberties Union] ACLU observers, but with an emphasis on morality instead of legality,” says Rev. Tara Wilkins of Bridgeport United Church of Christ.

Wilkins is part of the Portland Interfaith Clergy Resistance, and she is on the clock even when she is not at demonstrations. “Almost every night of the week, some people from our group are present at the protests. Those of us that aren’t present are monitoring them on Signal—staying in constant contact.” And yes, her ministry extends to Sunday mornings. “My church just voted in June to become an anti-racist church,” says Wilkins. This means that her church is doing workshops and social justice work, but also looking at the way they work at a systemic level to dismantle white supremacy in their daily operations. “We’re living this out in a variety of ways. We’re doing classes, changing ourselves, and doing education as a church council on what an anti-racist system might look like.”

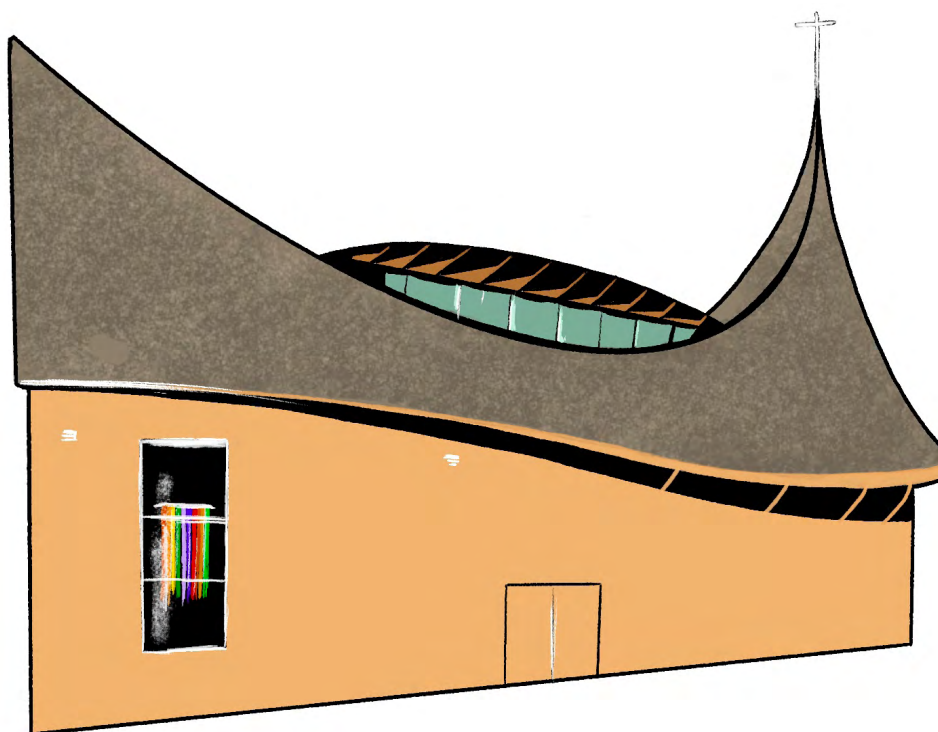
While protests go on, Portland’s Christian left has also been opening church buildings. First Congregational United Church of Christ sits on the South Park Blocks. Early on, the congregation started opening the gothic cathedral a couple nights a week to give protestors a place to get medical care, or even just use the bathroom. Soon they were open most nights, and had enlisted volunteer nurses, doctors, and mental health specialists. First Congregational United Church of Christ belongs to the United Church



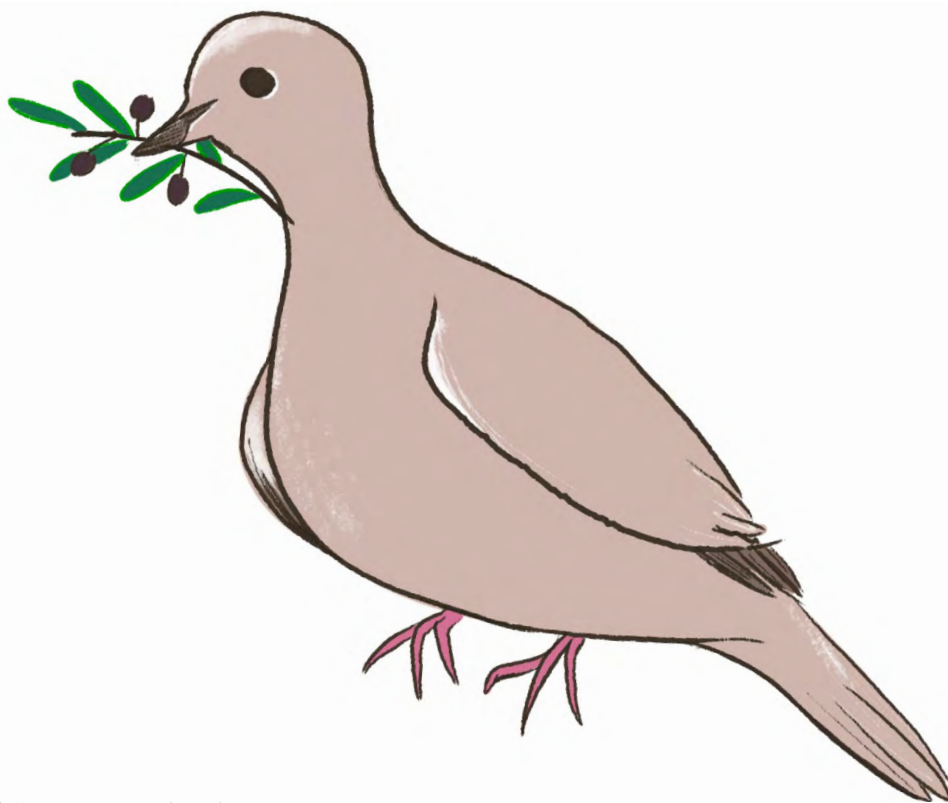
of Christ (UCC). This is a denomination founded in the 1950s in the wake of World War 2. The hope was to create a liberal denomination that would take a stand on social issues and make justice a priority.

Both Wilkins and Brownell are UCC pastors. The United Church of Christ is certainly not the only progressive denomination, but it is a good case study. The UCC was the first Protestant denomination in the United States to ordain a Black pastor in 1785, the first to ordain a woman in 1853, and the first to ordain an openly gay pastor in 1972.

UCC theology is contextual. They are not biblical literalists. They do not believe the Bible







was written by God, Jesus, or any celestial authority. Instead, they believe the Bible is a complex text written by thousands of different people over time. “The Bible was never intended to be read or experienced literally. It’s a collection of all different kinds of literature. Different parts of it need to be experienced in different ways,” says Brownell. “A lot of it is poetry and song and stories that are intended to be metaphorical.”

At a church in Beaverton, Friday youth group (currently held over Zoom) commonly includes discussions on gender, race, and sexuality. Many of the youth are LGBTQ+, and hate is not tolerated. Youth group starts with check-ins. How was your week? Where did you see God? What is your favorite song off the new Taylor Swift album? Faces in squares light up during escape rooms, games and prayers. God is there, not as an absolute authority, but a participant in the party. “We have a youth covenant, we’ve established rules. What is said in the circle stays in the circle. We don’t talk about other people outside the circle, and we honor each other as they are. It’s a safe spot for whoever they are. And everyone within that circle knows that,” says Amy Norden, Youth Director for Cedar Hills UCC.

The UCC also takes sex education very seriously. Our Whole Lives (OWL) is a partnership with the Unitarian Universalists. OWL is a comprehensive sexual education curriculum that starts in kindergarten and extends into adulthood. It teaches a sex-positive view of bodies, covering topics from body image to how to put on a condom to how to make a dental dam out of a condom. “I went to the training and it was very, very awkward. I didn’t know if I would be able to do it,” said Norden of the training for

teaching the OWL curriculum. “But then I started learning.” Norden thinks OWL prepares youth for the realities of adult relationships, and is well worth any awkwardness. “We have these preconceived ideas of what sexuality is and a lot of people just think sexuality is about sex, which it’s not. Once I learned more and readjusted my own views, it became a lot easier to teach,” said Norden. “OWL teaches about consent and boundaries, honoring people’s likes and dislikes, and most of all, honoring the self.”

Perhaps the most divisive issue, the one that gets blood boiling, Bibles thumped, and the Lord’s name invoked most, is abortion. In Oregon, Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) is an alliance between various Protestant denominations and Catholics. EMO holds fundraisers throughout the year including an AIDS luncheon to raise money for the treatment of those with HIV/AIDS in the community. Every election cycle they publish a bulletin with endorsements for various leaders and ballot initiatives. They weigh in on taxes, education, and infrastructure, but EMO never advises on abortion. This is because the group would never be able to reach consensus.

The UCC is a member of EMO and is pro-choice. Its members demonstrate and vote for the rights of women. Here’s the thing though, you don’t have to be pro-choice to be in the UCC. In fact, every stance on political and social issues is only a generalization. You don’t have to believe anything to be in the UCC. The UCC comes out of the Congregational tradition. These are the folks that burned the witches and founded Yale and Harvard. The Congrega-

tionalists believed that individual congregations determine their rules and stances on issues. This means that there is no single truth in the UCC. The term “discernment” is often used, this means coming to conclusions on God’s will. Members of the UCC tend to believe this works best in democracy, and thus have yearly congregational meetings where they vote to adopt stances on abortion, or in the case of Wilkins’ church, white supremacy. Perhaps the greatest strength of the Christian left is its multiplicity. There is no single way.

On United States currency there are written two things: In God We Trust, and E Pluribus Unum—out of many one. This is a good way to describe the Christian left. There is no one way, but there is work to be done. This Sunday, Wilkins and Brownell will stand at virtual pulpits. Norden will watch a service streamed on YouTube surrounded by family. Hate won’t be tolerated. Love will be celebrated. This Sunday, go to a virtual church if you want. Or sleep in. Make pancakes or listen to that new Taylor Swift album. Do what you need to do. According to UCC theology, as far as Sundays go, God asks nothing, but his table is open, and all are welcome. •

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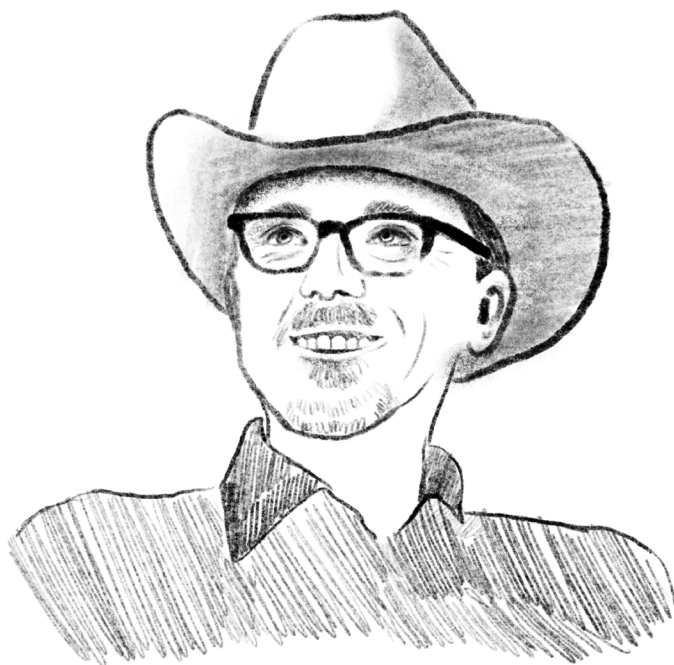


# A True Professional

Pete Krebs— one of Portland’s most iconic working musicians— talks about COVID-19, vocational challenges, and his first new album in nearly two decades

by Morgan Troper

illustrations by Alison White



Pete Krebs chose probably the worst time to release his first new album in 18 years. Not that he had any way of knowing 2020 would be so dismal—nobody did, really, barring the clairvoyants among us.

“When all this is said and done, I’ll do a record release show,” Krebs tells me over the phone. “I’m going to wait until I can do it so that it’s in a way that works with my sensibilities. But I’m not super stressed about it. I’m just glad to have a record out.”

Krebs’ bona fides are vast and varied. Outside Portland, the songwriter is perhaps best known for his work with the seminal, early ‘90s alternative rock band Hazel—a fixture of the city’s halcyon post-grunge glory days. And as a solo artist, Krebs released the now-legendary “Shytown / No Confidence Man” split 7” with Elliott Smith in 1994.

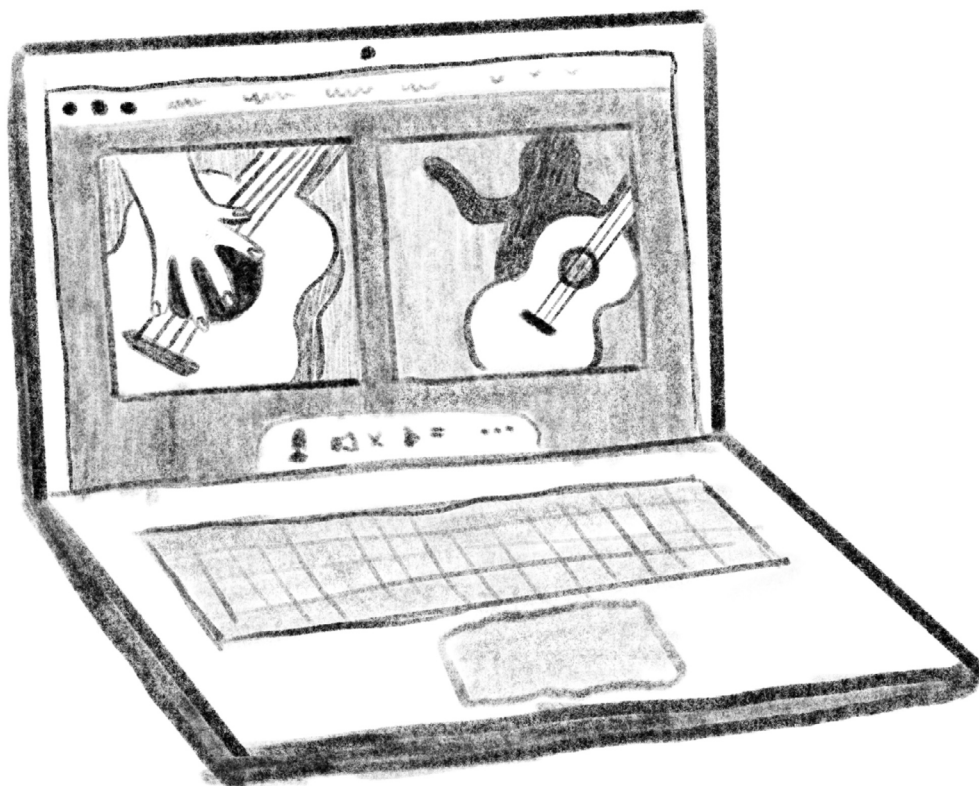
After 2002’s “Know It By Heart”, Krebs took a break from recording and releasing new material, although his label Cavity Search released the essential compilation “Hey Pete Krebs!” back in 2016. In recent decades, he’s become something of a local emblem for a very particular breed of tireless working musician—just the sort who is struggling to stay afloat in our post-coronavirus reality.

To a certain extent, that workmanlike approach is reflected in Krebs’ new LP, “All My Friends Are Ghosts,” which the songwriter recorded with his backing band The Gossamer Wings. It’s an album of stellar country rock that evokes artists like Gram Parsons and Jackson Browne. The music on “All My Friends Are Ghosts” is imbued with the seasoned perspective of someone who has clearly dedicated their entire life to the craft.

“For the past 30 years, I’ve played approximately 200 to 250 shows a year,” Krebs says. “[Before Coronavirus hit and everything shut down], I was averaging about three to five shows a week. Pretty much everything was cancelled within a week—restaurant gigs, bar gigs, even the weddings that I was scheduled to play. Everything just came to a stop. It’s been the longest break [without playing live] in my adult life.”

Though the pandemic has been nothing short of disastrous for musicians and the performing arts in general, artists like Krebs—who aren’t necessarily raking it in from evergreen royalties or lucrative Toyota ad placements and who rely primarily on local, live performances for their incomes—have been hit extra hard.

Krebs recently played his first live show in nearly six months—but out of an abundance of



caution, he says he's being "really selective" and will only consider playing outdoor gigs for the time being despite receiving a variety of offers. In the interim, Krebs—like virtually all other professional gigging musicians who saw their livelihoods evaporate overnight at the beginning of the pandemic—has had to get creative.

Earlier this month, Pitchfork ran a piece on professional musicians who have started teaching music lessons over Zoom in an effort to weather the pandemic. This applies to Krebs as well, who was already a music instructor before the pandemic.

"In addition to gigging off and on throughout the years, I've taught guitar lessons," he says. "And so I always felt pretty comfortable [being able to make that switch.] But my cost of living is pretty low too, so, you know."

Beyond teaching, musicians have been left with few options. Since March, live-streaming has become a popular alternative to live shows—but it's not a perfect substitute, obviously, or a model that artists can easily or reliably monetize.

"A lot of musicians will [include a virtual tip jar in their streams], and, especially early on, people were really responsive and trying to take care of the musicians," Krebs says. "I think as more and more musicians need to go that route to, you know, supplant the living they were making before all this happened, [we've realized] that every little bit helps."

A substantial amount has been written about the plight facing live music venues, both locally and nationally. In the Spring, I authored a piece for OPB on the Independent Venue Coalition

of Oregon—an organization comprising several local venue owners that has been lobbying for relief for the state's floundering live music industry.

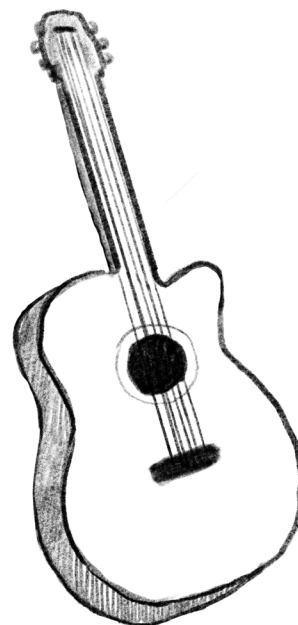
But it doesn't seem like there's been the same amount of attention spent on the plight facing the musicians themselves, which is somewhat surprising. This could be because the job title "professional musician" is uniquely impossible to essentialize; institutionally speaking, there's little parity between a violinist for the Oregon Symphony and someone who plays original rock songs on the club circuit, even if they both play music for a living. According to Krebs, it's more difficult for the latter type to lobby for official representation or collect union benefits.

"It reminds me of the time in the '90s when we were trying to unionize musicians," Krebs tells me. "And the issue that made that difficult was, how do you define what a working musician is? [A lot of us] don't have protections. There are no certifications, and there's nothing to separate people who have been doing it for a long time from people who have, you know, been doing it for five years or something like that. It's just too loose of a situation."

Despite the less-than-ideal circumstances surrounding the release of his new album, Krebs insists he's not wallowing in sorrow. His outlook is realistic, but also constructive: "I think sometimes we—or at least I—can come across as only focusing on the negative," Krebs admits. "But I want to focus on the positive, too, which is that I probably wouldn't have been able to become a working musician in the first place if it weren't

for Portland and the people here and their openness to different kinds of music."

"I don't want to come across as someone bitching about everything because when all is said and done, I've been able to do exactly what I wanted with my life. But, you know, I look forward to things getting a little bit better—and for my friends and I to be able to go back to work." •





# Black Is King



by Cymone Lucas  
illustration by Haley Riley

For the second time, Beyoncé has come out with a feature length visual album that challenges the longstanding outline for music videos. The film, titled “Black Is King,” debuted on July 31, 2020 on Disney Plus. The visual album is set as a companion to “The Lion King: The Gift,” the soundtrack to the live action remake of “The Lion King.” “Black is King” is an hour and 25 minute visual masterpiece. The messages in the film are a shift from “Lemonade,” which came out in 2016 and focuses on the Black experience in the United States—instead, “Black is King” is arguably a love letter to Africa and a search for Blackness from the past and into the future.

The film opens with short clips—the visual quality shifts from the sharpness of a digital camera to the grainy texture of film. The short clips provide a compelling imagery that draws

the viewer in. Throughout the film, sometimes shocking and captivating visuals add to the story and help to convey the sense of moving through time.

The third song of the album, “Find Your Way Back,” is paired with stars, sparkly clothing, and detailed traditional masks. When comparing the visuals in “Find Your Way Back” to the aesthetics of the ninth song, “Mood 4 Eva,” the shift in time and place can be clearly seen. The song is set at a lavish mansion where everyone wears suits and more “Western” clothing. There is a boy who runs through the house in traditional African dress and is then “made-over” halfway through the song and put in a suit. Flashes of African culture and clothing are shown only at the end of the song, alluding to the incorporation of African culture in the identities of Black Americans who have no close ties to Africa.

As a young Black woman in America, I

saw the visual album as a reflection of what it means to be Black in America, and to not have any close family ties in Africa—in a sense not knowing where you come from. With the lyrics of “Find Your Way Back,” Beyoncé challenges her African American viewers to connect to that part of our history. The film tells a story of history and keeping heritage in your pocket to inform the future. Beyoncé’s visual albums have captivated audiences and challenged other artists to do the same, tell stories that move people and challenge them to think. Visual albums may be the new wave for the future generation of musicians and artists. •



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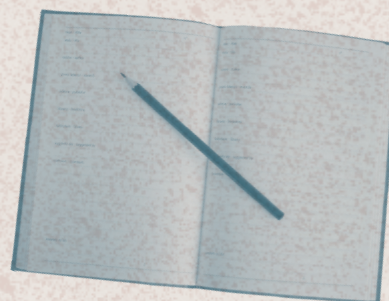
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